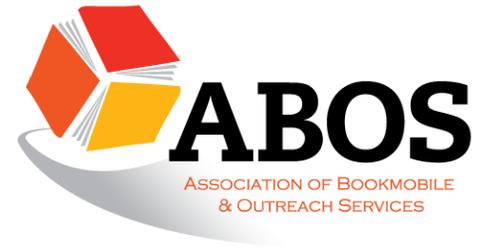


Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

Bridges (WI) Library System’s “Library Memory Project” is the recipient of the 2021 ABOS Innovation in Outreach Programming Award. The Innovation in Outreach Programming Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services, recognizes a library’s achievement in planning and implementing an innovative or creative outreach program, which has had a measurable impact on its community.

The Library Memory Project (LMP) is an initiative of the Bridges Library System, which serves 24 public libraries in Jefferson and Waukesha counties in Wisconsin. Four public libraries established the LMP in 2015 to offer social engagement opportunities, also known as memory cafes, for individuals living with memory loss, along with their family, friends, or care partners. The LMP now consists of 21 member libraries across multiple counties and library consortia; the LMP also partners with the Alzheimer’s Association and local Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Each memory cafe offers activities, crafts, and time to socialize. Librarians are trained to work with those with dementia, and the program is a safe space for attendees living with dementia, as well as their caregivers. Instead of offering the memory cafe programs at one library location, the cafes rotate each month between different libraries, and some have been hosted at other community locations, such as local parks and schools. Moving the programs between libraries encourages attendees to visit other libraries, expands the audience, and allows staff from different libraries to work together on planning and implementation.

While the main focus of the Library Memory Project has been in-person memory cafes, the pandemic quickly put a halt to this model. In June of 2020, the LMP rolled out virtual memory cafes. To encourage engagement, memory cafe facilitators created Take & Make kits to accompany each virtual memory cafe.

The Bridges Library System’s cafe coordinator, Angela Meyers, has become a trained Dementia Friends master trainer. The Dementia Friends program is a global movement that is changing the way people think, act, and talk about dementia. With this training, Angela has provided a Train the Trainer event, as well as information sessions, to the member libraries participating in the Library Memory Project.

Since the start of the LMP, library staff have tracked the number of attendees at each cafe, as well as where the participants live. Since 2015, the LMP has hosted 158 memory cafes (13 virtual and 145 in person), with 2,083 attendees from 46 different zip codes. During the pandemic, LMP facilitators distributed 66 Take & Make craft kits to persons living with memory loss, while 125 caregivers participated in the Caregiver Bag distribution event.

Tim Harrington, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter, shares that, "The Bridges Library System has been a consistent presence in everything I have experienced in the community for many years, and show no signs of slowing down. It is always a pleasure to partner with them as we always know the end result of whatever the event is will be a success and reach many community members."

The Innovation in Outreach Programming Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, during the 2021 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 10:15 a.m. CST.